



#### WHAT IS MEANT BY "MINORITY HEALTH?"

Minority health" refers to the morbidity and mortality of African Americans, American Indians/ Alaska Natives; Asians, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders; and Hispanics in the United States.



#### WHY CONDUCT RESEARCH ON "MINORITY HEALTH?"

Minorities at all stages of life suffer poorer health and higher rates of premature death than the majority population. With some conditions, such as asthma and HIV/ AIDS, a good deal is known about why minority populations are the hardest hit, but less about how to reduce the disproportionate burden of these illnesses. With other conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, lupus and certain cancers, it is still unclear why minorities are disproportionately affected. Supporting research that attempts to fill these gaps in basic health knowledge is paramount in the quest to uncover new scientific knowledge that will lead to better health for all Americans.

Eliminating the disproportionate burden of ill health and disability among minority Americans will also benefit the Nation economically. More people will be fit to work, gaining economic independence and contributing to the Nation's productivity and competitiveness.



#### WHY DOES NIH NEED THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH ON MINORITY HEALTH (ORMH)?

NIH is committed to solving the research questions that result from the disparity of health status among Americans. In addition, NIH recognizes that if the United States hopes to maintain its international preeminence in scientific research in the 21st century, it needs to draw future generations of scientists from a more diverse pool of people than have been drawn to science in the past.

The establishment of ORMH by the Congress emphasizes the obligation of NIH in solving these problems and facilitates the effort by supplying the necessary focal point within the Office of the Director, NIH.



#### WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE ORMH?

The NIH ORMH has a twofold mission:

- To support and promote biomedical research aimed at improving the health status of minority Americans across the lifespan, and
- To support and promote programs aimed at expanding the participation of underrepresented minorities in all aspects of biomedical and behavioral research.



## HOW WILL ORMH ACCOMPLISH ITS GOALS?

The ORMH works in partnership both with grassroots organizations in minority communities and with the scientists and program experts in the NIH institutes and centers (ICs). ORMH does not offer research/training support directly to the community. Rather, it supports studies and programs as pilot projects managed by the partner ICs. Projects that receive support are subject to rigorous scientific scrutiny and to ongoing assessment. It is intended that projects demonstrating effectiveness and scientific accomplishment will ultimately become part of the partner IC's research portfolio, thereby freeing ORMH funds to support new pilot projects in other areas of need.



## WHAT HAS ORMH ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR?

The Minority Health Initiative (MHI) was launched in 1992. This is the rubric under which a series of multi-year biomedical and behavioral research studies and a set of training programs are being funded. These efforts are targeted to address the disparity in minority health across the lifespan and to increase the participation of minorities in biomedical research. This agenda was formulated based on the recommendations of a Fact-Finding Team comprised of 53 distinguished citizens who assimilated information and ideas from nearly 1,000 representatives of the biomedical community around the country.

Phase I and Phase II of an assessment of NIH Minority Research and Training Programs have been completed. Phase III is underway.

A working relationship with the community has been established over the years through consultations and conferences. In 1994, the National Conference on Minority Health Research and Research Training was held in Chicago. In 1996, consensus conferences in Honolulu, Miami, Spokane, and Puerto Rico were conducted, each with a different minority group. The purpose of these meetings was to inform ORMH constituencies of the progress made, to solicit feedback on those achievements, and to obtain further information on the needs of minority populations.

In addition to identifying and filling the gaps in health research and research training support so that the health needs of all Americans are met, ORMH is committed to:

- Promoting the inclusion of minorities in research study populations
- Enhancing the capacity of the minority community to participate in addressing its health concerns
- Increasing collaborative research and research training programs between minority and majority institutions
- Improving the competitiveness and number of well-trained minority scientists applying for NIH research funding
- Developing an ongoing assessment tool for minority programs at NIH and a coordinated information system to link these programs
- Increasing utilization of NIH minority research supplements



## WHAT WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE?

For more information, please contact:

*Office of Research on Minority Health*

*National Institutes of Health*

*Building 1, Room 258*

*One Center Drive, MSC 0164*

*Bethesda, MD 20892-0164*

*tel 301.402.1366*

*fax 301.402.7040*

*301.496.4035*

*September 1999*

